

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The United States House of Representatives passed H.R. 8, to make the repeal of the estate tax permanent, yesterday by a vote of 264 to 163. Representative Xavier Becerra (CA – 31), the only congressional member from Southern California on the House Committee on Ways and Means, voted against the bill citing the dramatic fiscal and economic effects of continued tax cuts for Americans who need tax relief the least.

During yesterday's debate on H.R. 8, Rep. Becerra delivered the following speech on the Floor of the House:

"Mr. Speaker, anecdotes are indispensable when the facts speak to the contrary, and perhaps we have to remind Members what the facts are once again. These are not our figures, these are not made-up figures, these are figures provided by the federal government, the Bush Administration.

"In 1999 roughly 2.3 million Americans died. Of those 2.3 million Americans who died, less than 1.3 percent, some 33,000 Americans, paid estate taxes. That is the 1.3 percent of the wealthiest Americans in our country who paid estate taxes. So 98.7 percent of the rest of Americans who passed away in 1999 paid zero estate taxes. So when we talk about repealing the estate tax, eliminating the estate tax, we are giving a tax break not for Americans, but the 1.3 percent richest Americans in this country.

"It is easy with anecdotes to hide behind family farms and family businesses, which constitute less than one percent of the estates that are paying estate taxes. And it is real easy to hide behind the fact that in legislation like this, we are back-loading the costs. We are phasing in the repeal so slowly, so gradually, that when we start to add up the real cost of the repeal of the estate tax to the wealthiest 1.3 percent of Americans – when we fully phase it in when it is gone completely – it totals about \$80 billion a year starting in 2014 when this takes full effect. Eighty billion dollars a year in revenue will be lost to the Federal Treasury, more than \$800 billion over the decade from 2014 to 2023.

"Now, perhaps it would not be so bad to give the wealthiest one percent of Americans a tax cut that 99 percent of Americans would not get at a cost of \$800 billion over the next 10 years from 2014 to 2023 if not for the fact that today, every Member knows that we have a budget deficit for the year of over \$400 billion – the largest deficit this country has ever faced in any year; and we

are told that it is probably going to rise to half a trillion dollars, \$500 billion, next year. And that is after two years ago when the president took office and said we are going to have surpluses totaling over \$5.6 trillion for the next 10 years.

“We have seen a reversal from surpluses of \$5.6 trillion to now projections of a \$3.6 trillion debt over the next 10 years. How can we talk about giving \$800 billion to the 1.3 percent wealthiest Americans? We spend more in tax cuts than we spend in all our educational programs that the federal government spends on all our schools combined.

“Let us defeat this.”